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## EGYPT BEFORE B. C. 2000.

BY PROFESSOR HOWARD OSGOOD, D. D.,  
Rochester Theological Seminary, Rochester, N. Y.

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### II.

#### THE COURT.

From the first, the king is king of the double crown, of upper and lower Egypt. On reaching the throne he assumed a new name in addition to the one he had borne, and besides he took the titles of Horus, the Son of God, born of Heaven, Lord of the vulture and of the Uræus. He is the *Perao*, "that is, of the great house" (Brugsch, *Hist.*, p. 49), which we translate Pharaoh. "For his subjects the pharaoh was a god and lord (neb) *par excellence*" (*Ibid.*). He is "the vanquisher of his enemies." He is removed far above all the people in his own and in their estimation, and he looks forward and prepares for the formal, priestly worship of himself in his memorial chapel attached to his pyramid.

No court in Europe at the present day, and not even the court of Louis XIV., was ordered with a stricter adherence to the ceremonies that proclaim *procul, procul*, to the profane, than the court of these haughty lords of the vulture and the Uræus. The wife of one pharaoh and the mother of another makes record, on her memorial tablet, of her high privilege of beholding at pleasure the face of her son, the reigning king; a privilege not accorded to all queen-mothers. A prince of the blood royal mentions it as a special favor that he was permitted to smell the ground (prostrate himself) before and touch the knees of the pharaoh. The highest officer under a king of the sixth dynasty writes on his tomb that he was accorded the supreme favor of wearing his sandals in the palace (De Rouge, *Recherches*, p. 123). The pharaoh was addressed as "his holiness," or as "the Son of God," or "by a grammatical construction, which, in the translation, is best rendered by the word 'he'" (Brugsch, p. 49.)

(The pharaoh might marry a lady not of royal blood, but as descent was reckoned especially through the mother, her children might not become pharaohs, though they were princes (Brugsch, *Hist.*, p. 103).)

His queen, the pharaoh calls his dearly beloved; and he pictures her seated with himself, her arm around his neck or in his arm. But dying, he is placed alone in his grandeur in his pyramid, while she is buried in a plain tomb near but outside the pyramid.

"A steward had charge of the king's household, another had charge of his wardrobe, another acted as hair-dresser, and took care of the nails of his holiness, and prepared his bath. One was over the singing and playing, and prepared the means for the pharaoh's pleasures and enjoyments. Other nobles were charged with the administration of the magazines of wheat, dates, and fruits in general, of the cellar, of the store of oil, of the bakery, of the butchering, and of the stables. The court of exchequer was not wanting. The private domains, the farms, the palaces, and even the lakes and canals of the king were placed under the care of inspectors" (Brugsch, *Hist.*, p. 50).

There were many palaces. The younger princes and princesses had their palaces, with governors appointed for them. But there are no remains of these early palaces. We learn the above facts about them from numerous inscriptions. If the pyramid was the mausoleum, and if high officers and nobles could at that age build and decorate such tombs as are found at Sakkarah, and display their homes filled with works of art on the walls of their tombs, certainly the residence of the pharaoh, where it was a crime to wear one's sandals without permission, was something more than a mud hut. When a pharaoh had eight statues of himself cut with superlative art, in one small chapel, and in the tomb of one high officer twenty statues of himself were placed in the wall, it is most probable that the residence of the pharaoh and the houses of his nobles bore some correspondence to this advance in art.

There were multitudes of officials about the court. There were "the chief of the house of gold" (secretary of the treasury), "chief of the house of battle, of the bow and arrow," "chief of the double house," i. e., of peace and war, "chief scribe" or secretary, "chief of the public works," "chief of all the mines," "governor of the royal domains," "chief of the house of writing," "chief commandant of the great hall," i. e., of judgment, "chief of the writings of complaint and request," "chief architect," "governor of the south," etc., etc. Nobles were entitled "hereditary highness," "prince," "illustrious," "the intimate friend," i. e., of the pharaoh (Brugsch, p. 50).

The priesthood was hereditary, and the chief priest was always a prince royal. Even at this time men in office, sacred or secular, had learned the art of being pluralists, and some princes were priests and generals, and governors and judges, all at once.

#### JUDICIARY.

The law was written out and elaborated to minute points, not only as to the general conduct of affairs of state, but as to inheritance, tithes, rents, taxes, military service, forced labor.

In one picture, the judges are seen sitting on a raised platform and taking notes, while the officers, who would closely resemble our policemen with their locusts, if they only had a little more covering on them, bring the prisoners before the court (Baedeker, *Lower Egypt*, p. 382. Tomb of Ti).

The judges were to be governed by the written law, and an unjust accuser was treated to a variety of punishments (Brugsch, p. 51). Real estate was carefully measured and bounded by stone marks, and the rights of children were guarded.

#### ARMY.

There was an army, commanded by officers and drilled in the tactics peculiar to their warfare. It would appear, from one inscription, as if the whole population was at times liable to conscription. The army was provided with clubs, axes, bows and arrows. Under a king of the sixth dynasty the army had been assembled by many tens of thousands from all parts of Egypt, from the cataract to the sea; but it was decided to increase it by a contingent drawn from the Negroes of Ethiopia who had been subdued. Before this army set out towards Asia it was found necessary to drill this contingent, which was done by the orders of, and by the officers appointed by, the general-in-chief, Una (Brugsch, p. 100; DeRouge, *Recherches*, p. 124; Maspero, p. 90). To this army there was an orderly distribution of provisions. The army proved itself victorious, and brought home a multitude of captives. The same army was also transported by sea to some foreign dominion, and was again victorious.

#### LIFE.

We have spoken of the hard metes and bounds which are the necessity of every well regulated state; but we feel a sympathetic interest in the daily life of the people, how they spent their days, how they dressed, what they ate, and the closing scenes of life with them.

Then, as now, the burden of life pressed heaviest on the poorer classes. However moral and pious were their precepts of humanity, written at length on their tombs, for immediate effect on boy, man, or beast, these old Egyptians had the greatest confidence in the short stick. Nobles, priests, warriors, and the innumerable scribes, or literary class, looked with scorn upon all tradesmen, artisans and slaves, whom they called the "mob," the "stinking multitude." These were the phrases of *parvenus*, for there was no caste in Egypt. The poorest might rise to the highest official position, and marry a princess. Some of the very highest officers have been men enough to write on their tombs that their ancestors were unknown, or that they were of

very humble birth; while others simply omit to mention that subject, which they never would have failed to elaborate, if there was any thing to be said.

In the temple-tomb of Ti, at Sakkarah, a pluralist dignitary of the highest grade under the fifth dynasty, we find sculptured and painted in exquisite art the life of a great landed proprietor. He, whose ancestors are not mentioned, stands with his long walking staff in his right hand and his baton of office in his left hand. His wife, a princess in her own right, is at his side, and he calls her "the beloved of her husband," "the mistress of the house," "the palm of amiability to her husband."

He is dressed with his two sticks, a wig, a collar, or necklace, and a short tunic. She is dressed in a single long garment from the neck to the feet. It was fashionable in those days to have the head shaved, and those who could afford it covered the head from the heat or in full dress with a great wig, like the judges in England. Yet it was not a rigid custom, for we also find the hair worn long by some females. The oldest statues in the world are the marvelously lifelike twin representations of Prince Rahotep and his wife, the princess Nefert. He does not wear the wig, but is dressed in a collar from which hangs a jewel, and with the short tunic, but she wears an abundant wig and on it a mood of "ribbon ornamented with roses and leaves." She is also dressed in a garment reaching from the neck to the ankles. Females also wore a shorter garment held in place by appliances which selfish man in later ages has appropriated to himself, suspenders. Princess Nefert wears a splendid necklace (Edwards, p. 711), "of six circles of green and red enamel, from which a row of emeralds and rubies depended."

Linen wholly of flax was the dress of the richer classes. The poorer people needed little dress and often used less. A cloth around the loins was full dress for a workman. Men are also pictured when at work without any clothing at all, and it is sad to say that even women are so represented. For a gentleman of the old school, full dress consisted in a wig, collar and bracelets, a staff and a very short tunic. Sandals were worn, though the foot is generally represented as bare. They were very careful of their nails, and exceedingly neat in their persons. And no doubt they were highly cultured and refined gentlemen, certainly with a higher appreciation of morality than the Greeks or Romans, though even with them there were streaks of coarseness and permission of obscenity in their presence, that moderates our estimate of their purity.

Women were treated as equals. They were not veiled. They

enjoyed as much pride as their haughty husbands. It was no disgrace for a princess to marry a man who had risen to high office from an humble position, and though her husband was not made a prince by his marriage, her sons were princes by the right of their mother (Baedeker, *Lower Egypt*, p. 375).

Ladies delighted in jewels, and the art of the lapidary was carried to high excellence. They had earrings, and bracelets, and necklaces, and fingerrings. There were artists in porcelain, and glaze, and enamel, whose work remains to the present, and who, doubtless, like their successors, gave the ladies much to do and to talk about. These ladies of high degree loved sweet smells, and had their bottles of perfume of all shapes and sizes. They had found the great usefulness of the bronze mirror, and to preserve it in better condition for service they kept it in a leather covering. They had already forgotten that beauty unadorned is adorned the most, and had progressed to the evil invention of a blue or black pigment for the eyes, which they kept in vases of alabaster and of bronze. While they, like us, had jugs and basins of pottery, they exceeded us in having them of bronze also.

An elaborate and animated picture of life in Egypt before 2000 B. C. is found in the temple-tomb of Ti. Before the painter bas-reliefs of Ti and his wife, the princess, are spread out all over the interior walls an amazing number of bas-reliefs (Edwards, p. 88 seq.) cut in a fine and marble-like limestone. "Ranged in horizontal parallel lines about a foot and a half in depth, these extraordinary pictures, row above row, cover every inch of wall space from floor to ceiling, The relief is singularly low." It nowhere "exceeds a quarter of an inch. The surface, which is covered with a thin film of very fine cement, has a quality and polish like ivory" (Edwards, p. 89).

The pictures tell their own story. Ti was a wealthy man. He owned thirty-six estates in many parts of Egypt, and his servants on these estates, which have their appropriate names, are represented bringing in the produce of each. This is carefully counted and noted down by scribes and then put in the granaries or yards. Ti owned large herds of cattle, long-horned or without horns, herds of asses and gazelles and antelopes, and flocks of goats and of geese and of cranes, and his scribes had the count of each herd and flock. He had workmen of all kinds on his estates; they smelted ingots of gold, and blew glass; there were sculptors and masons and potters, and tanners, and furniture-makers and boat-builders. They ploughed his fields and sowed the seed and reaped his harvests. He had his sailors and huntsmen and fishermen. The whole process of building vessels is before us, from the squaring of the timber to the caulking

of the seams. He had boats of burden and pleasure-boats. These boats were built of cedar (chiefly) and of acacia and papyrus. They had keels and ribs and gunwale. The sails were of linen, square, and were hoisted as sails are now. The mast was stayed fore and aft.

Ti evidently looked back upon a long life of good living, and intended giving Osiris a hint of what he expected in the land of bliss. His servants stuff whole flocks of geese and cranes, as the inscription tells us, "in order to fatten them." His bakers were artists in bread or cake of fanciful form, and his cooks understood how to truss geese and ducks and to prepare all sorts of delicacies. His fishermen caught and spread and salted fish.

Ti was a sportsman, and we see him spearing the hippopotamus and crocodile, and hunting birds, and fishing. He had hunting dogs for the gazelle and mountain goat. He speared fish or caught them with hook and line or in nets or in wickerwork pounds, like our eelpots. His servants caught lions and other wild animals and brought them to him alive in cages. They milked the cows on Ti's farm in just the same way and under as many difficulties as are found now with the Jerseys. Sometimes they tied the legs of those that kicked, and sometimes one held the troublesome calf while another milked. Again they tie cow and calf separately to well-made staples fastened in the ground. They prove in their tying up the forefoot of an ox by a strap over the back that they antedate Mr. Rarey's re-discovery by about 4000 years. The donkey then was the faithful ancestor of the present race. The inscription tells us how the servants argued with him to no purpose, until it came to blows, first with his heels and a bray, and then with their stick.

The plough, the hoe, the sickle, the head yoke, the three-pronged threshing fork, the sacks for grain, the saws, axes, mallets, hammers, drills, baskets, work-bench, tables, chairs, all the tools of the workmen, the workmen at work, cutting stone, building walls, making furniture, etc., etc., are all set out with marvelous clearness and with a description of the pictures.

Men and women of wealth sat at tables of bronze or alabaster, on low-backed or high-backed chairs of artistic shape and carving. A large and generous variety of food was offered to them, fish fresh and salted, beef, veal, goat (not sheep), antelope, ibex, gazelle, cranes, geese, ducks (no hens), cucumbers, onions, bread of wheat and barley, grapes, figs, dates, pomegranates, olives, melons, milk, and wine of upper and lower Egypt.

Games for amusement, very much like our chequers or chess, delighted their leisure hours. Men singers and women singers were

among the appurtenances of great houses. Dwarfs and monkeys were kept to make sport. There was the same chaffing between servants and boatmen as one hears on the Nile to-day. Wrestlers tried their skill and strength as they learned to do afterwards in times ridiculously modern in the Athenian or Corinthian gymnasium or palæstra.

#### LITERATURE.

It would be contrary to all the laws of the human mind to find such a development in political, legislative and social order where literature was unknown. But we are not left to inference on this point or even to the later copies of works, still extant, which are referred, by their copyists, back to this early time.

The more than fifty steles and numerous inscriptions cut in the hardest of all stone, proves that the hieroglyphics were fully developed and equal to any demands upon them. The class of scribes was on a par with that of the priests and warriors. They were secretaries and accountants in the palace and in offices of state and courts of justice and on the farm and boats, till it would seem as if every word spoken and deed performed was written down by the scribe, ever present with his reed pen and ink and writing-tablet.

That the people had made some progress in geometry and mensuration and testing the quality of stone is proved by the pyramids and tombs.

There were at this time not only scribes and a fully developed written language, but there were libraries. There was a literature, and this literature was large enough and sufficiently prized to be kept in libraries, and the importance of the library was such that it was a high honor to be appointed chief of the royal library. On the tombs we find the title, "royal scribe of the palace, doctor, chief of writing, who serves as a light to all the writings in the house of pharaoh," "chief of the royal writings," etc.

From the earliest times, according to the inscriptions, *Saf*, the goddess of libraries, was worshiped at Memphis (*DeRouge*, p. 43). It is a very curious and instructive fact that, both in Chaldea (and Palestine), at dates but little lower than B. C. 2000, we find the proof that certain cities were designated as library cities, and some of the records of those ancient libraries are now in the British Museum.

Did these people live in the last century or about four thousand years ago?